

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Justice Shahabuddin
Ahmed of Bangladesh in Dhaka
March 20, 2000

Mr. President, Prime Minister, distinguished guests, this has been a day of extraordinary hospitality, insight, and discovery for us. On behalf of the American delegation, I thank you for all you have done to make us feel at home.

For 5 years now, my wife and daughter have been singing the glories of Bangladesh. Finally, I am glad to see for myself. This day has been a watershed for both our nations. Americans admire Bangladesh as a proud Muslim nation, devoted to peace with its neighbors, to peace-keeping around the world, to tolerance and diversity within its borders.

When the great Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, he said this: "I am glad I have done some work to give expression to this great age when the East and the West are coming together." Although he did not live to see the creation of Bangladesh, Tagore would doubtless be proud of all you have done to lead your people into a new century. I believe he would also approve of what we did today to bring the East and the West closer together.

I was deeply gratified this morning to be the first American President to arrive in Bangladesh, and I am proud of the kind of partnership we are forging. It is about more than the ceremony of a state visit. It is about promoting democracy and the values that give meaning to our lives. It is about helping children stay in school and

have a better future, about investing in people who have never been given a chance to succeed before, and investing in a nation that now has a chance to succeed as never before.

Tomorrow the Sun will rise on a deeper friendship between America and Bangladesh. Through our ceremonies and our conversations, we have hastened the arrival of a more peaceful new day, the kind of day that Tagore spent his life imagining, a new day comprehending not only the absence of war and suffering but the presence of mutual understanding and common endeavors.

On behalf of all Americans, I pledge that we will work with you to build on this good day, to soften the hard facts of daily hardship, to make real the poetry of our finest aspirations.

I ask you now to join me in a toast to the President, the Prime Minister, the people of Bangladesh, and the friendship between our two nations. May it grow. May it deepen. May it affect the lives of our people in ways that are truly good.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:30 p.m. in the Banquet Hall of the Bangabhaban. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of President Ahmed.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Atal Behari
Vajpayee of India in New Delhi
March 21, 2000

Prime Minister Vajpayee. I am delighted to welcome President Clinton to India. His visit provides us a unique opportunity for historic confirmation in our relations. We have just concluded a very productive meeting. President Clinton and I have had an indepth exchange of views on many subjects. Our two delegations have also held extensive discussions. Our discus-

sions have been warm, friendly, and candid, reflecting our common desire to build a new relationship of mutual trust and respect.

Our objective is to forge a durable, politically constructive and economically productive partnership between the world's two largest democracies. I think with President Clinton's visit and

our meeting today, we have laid a firm foundation for the future.

President Clinton and I have just signed a vision statement. The statement outlines the contours of and defines the agenda of our partnership in the 21st century. We both agreed that our commitment to the principles and practice of democracy constitutes the bedrock of our relations and for our cooperative efforts internationally for peace, prosperity, and democratic freedom.

We have also concluded agreements and understandings on the establishment of very wide-ranging dialog architecture. Closer contacts between our business and scientific communities will be encouraged. Both countries will endeavor to enhance trade and investment, cooperate in energy and environment, and to draw upon the vast array of talent, especially in the area of information technology and frontier sciences, for the betterment of the lives of their peoples.

We share a common concern at the growing threat of terrorist violence and its links with religious extremism and illegal trade in narcotics. Both of us expressed our firm opposition to the use of any form of violence, whether as an instrument of terror against democratic society or as a means of realizing territorial ambition. Nothing justifies the use of such matters against innocent people. We expressed our determination to intensify our cooperation in this area.

President Clinton and I had a frank discussion on the issues of disarmament and nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The dialog which is in progress between our two countries on these issues has enhanced the mutual understanding of our respective concerns. I've explained to President Clinton the reasons that compel us to maintain a minimum nuclear deterrent. I have reiterated our firm commitment not to conduct further nuclear explosive tests, not to engage in a nuclear arms race, and not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against any country.

We have resolved to continue a dialog and to work together in cooperation with other countries to help bring about a peaceful and secure world completely free of the threat of all weapons of mass destruction.

In our discussion of regional issues, I reiterated our policy of developing friendly and cooperative relations with all our neighbors in accordance with established principles of good

neighborly relations, respect for each of their sovereignty and territorial integrity, and on the basis of agreements solemnly entered into. India remains committed to resolving its difference with its neighbors through peaceful bilateral dialog and in an atmosphere free from the thought of force and violence.

We agreed that problems between countries of the region should be resolved peacefully by the concerned countries themselves. As a means of implementing our agenda, a partnership in the 21st century, we have agreed to regular summit meetings. President Clinton has invited me to Washington; I am delighted to accept.

The President will have the opportunity over the next few days to see the rich cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity of our country, to experience the warmth and friendship of our people, to witness the delicate blend of tradition and modernity in our society, and to feel the democratic pulse of our large nation. I wish the President and the members of his delegation a very pleasant stay in India.

In that end, I would like to make some remarks on the tragic events in Jammu and Kashmir yesterday. The brutal massacre of 36 Sikhs in Jammu and Kashmir last night is further evidence of the ethnic cleansing that has been underway for a decade and is part of a pattern that we have experienced earlier, including during my visit to Lahore last year. The nation and the entire civilized community is outraged at this premeditated act of barbarism and joins us in condemning this act.

The attempt at cloaking ethnic terrorism in the guise of *jihad* carries no conviction. We and the international community reject the notion that *jihad* can be a part of any civilized country's foreign policy. None should doubt the determination of the people of India to safeguard the secular unity of our society.

Together we have defeated all of the challenges in the past, and we shall do so again. We have the means and the will to eliminate this menace.

Thank you.

President Clinton. Thank you, Prime Minister, for your remarks and for the warm welcome that you, your delegation, and the people of India have given to me and my family and the Americans who have come with me.

It has been 22 years since a United States President has visited this country. Of course, that is not much time in the grand sweep of

India's civilization, but it is close to half your history since becoming independent. That is far too long, and this day is therefore long overdue. I am glad to be here.

As the world's two largest democracies, we are united in believing that every person's dignity should be respected and every person's potential fulfilled. There is no better example of the power of freedom and opportunity to liberate human potential than the success that Americans of Indian heritage have enjoyed in our Nation.

I have come to India because I want us to build a dynamic and lasting partnership, based on mutual respect and mutual benefit. India and America should be better friends and stronger partners. In a world of increasing globalization, our futures plainly are intertwined. Today we have agreed to hold regular meetings between our heads of government and top officials. I thank the Prime Minister for accepting my invitation to visit the United States later this year. We have just signed, as you know, a joint vision statement that outlines the goals we share and the challenges we face.

The world has become a better place as more nations have joined us on the unfolding path of democracy. We want democracy to spread and deepen, to protect human rights, including the rights of women and minorities.

This June our two countries will convene the Community of Democracies meeting in Warsaw. I thank the Prime Minister for the leadership of India in this important endeavor. And I'm pleased that our National Endowment for Democracy, the Confederation of Indian Industry, and the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies here will organize the Asian Center for Democratic Governance, based here in New Delhi, to share our common experience with the hope of advancing freedom across Asia.

Both our nations now enjoy strong economic growth. Both are pioneering the information revolution. Today we've reached agreement to bring more jobs and opportunities to our people, to accelerate trade between us, to help India's financial markets and assist its small businesses, to institute a regular economic dialog between our Governments.

We both face, still, the challenges of better educating our children, lifting them from poverty, protecting them from disease and environmental peril. Today, these are global challenges; what happens in one nation affects others across

their borders. We have agreed to face these challenges together. And together we can succeed.

Finally, both our nations want a peaceful future. I recognize that India has real security concerns. We certainly share your outrage and heartbreak over last night's brutal attack in Kashmir. We offer our profoundest sympathies to the people, especially to the families of the victims. It reminds us of what tremendous suffering this conflict has caused India. The violence must end. This should be a time for restraint, for respect for the Line of Control, for renewed lines of communication.

I also stressed that at a time when most nations, including the United States and Russia, are making real progress in moving away from nuclear weapons, the world needs India to lead in the same direction.

While I am here, I will have the opportunity to speak with Indians about these issues and listen, as I have today, to the concerns of India's leaders and its people. Then our discussions will continue after I leave. I say again, we have neglected this relationship for more than two decades. It is too important to ever fall into disrepair again. I am committed to building a stronger partnership. And we are committed to building a better world.

I look forward to spending the next 4 days here, meeting with your people, learning more about a rich history and culture I have long admired, and strengthening a friendship that, indeed, is critical to the future of the entire planet.

Thank you very much.

Q. [Inaudible]

President Clinton. Thank you. I'll come get it when we finish the questions, how's that?

India-U.S. Relations

Q. This question is addressed to the Prime Minister. How did your one-to-one talks go, and what are your expectations of the future of India-U.S. relations?

Prime Minister Vajpayee. I'm glad you asked that question. As you can see, our talks have gone very well. We discussed substantive issues relating to bilateral relations. We discussed the situation in South Asia in a very frank and candid manner. I'm sure, as a result of this visit and as a result of the discussion, a new chapter is being added into our bilateral relations.

Nuclear Nonproliferation

Q. Mr. President, did you make any progress, did you achieve any progress today in persuading Prime Minister Vajpayee to take any of the specific steps that you have urged to restrain India's nuclear program, specifically, signing the CTBT, banning the production of fissile materials, and tightening export controls? If you didn't make any progress today and if you don't in the future, how close can this new relationship that you both have spoken of become?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, on this whole nonproliferation issue, we have had a dialog that has gone on for some time now under the leadership of Mr. Singh and Mr. Talbott. And I would like to thank the Indian Government for that work.

Secondly, I felt today that there was a possibility that we could reach more common ground on the issues of testing, on the production of fissile material, on export controls, and on restraint, generally.

With regard to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, you heard the Prime Minister's statement about his position on testing. I would hope that the democratic process will produce a signing and, ultimately, a ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban in India, just like I hope the democratic process will ultimately produce a ratification of the Test Ban Treaty in America that I signed. These are contentious issues. But I'm actually quite optimistic about our ability to make progress on them.

And again, I thank the Prime Minister for sanctioning what I think has been a very honest and thoroughgoing dialog. We've been working on this for some time, and we will continue to do it. And I believe we will wind up in a common position.

Situation in Kashmir

Q. This question is addressed to both President Clinton and Prime Minister Vajpayee. Thirty-five people were massacred in the valley yesterday, and both of you have expressed outrage at the incident. In the context of ongoing India-U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism, what are your reactions to this, and did this come up during your discussions on terrorism?

President Clinton. Would you like to go first, Prime Minister?

Let me ask you this, could you just repeat just the question you asked? Did this come up in our discussions—yes, it did. Ask me the previous question you asked. I want to make sure I understood it.

Q. In the context of ongoing India-U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism, did you discuss this issue in terms of—did you discuss this in the context of international terrorism? And did this question come up just in terms of the violence?

President Clinton. Well, first of all, we discussed it at some length, and I expressed privately to the Prime Minister my outrage about it—apparently the first targeting of the Sikhs in Kashmir. I don't think—the answer to your question is, I don't suppose it came up in the context of overall terrorism in the sense that it just happened last night. We have to know who did it before there could be a conclusion about that.

But I think that the targeting of innocent civilians is the worst thing about modern conflicts today. And the extent to which more and more people seem to believe it is legitimate to target innocent civilians to reach their larger political goals, I think that's something that has to be resisted at every turn. There should be less violence in Kashmir, not more. And when people take on others, they ought to be those that have the responsibility for defending—if somebody wants to fight, at least they ought to leave the civilians alone.

I think this is a horrible development in Kashmir, but unfortunately it's becoming all too common around the world. And one of the things that I hope we'll be able to do together is to reduce the incidence of violence against innocent civilians, not only here but in other parts of the world as well.

Q. Mr. Prime Minister, if you'd like?

Prime Minister Vajpayee. I have nothing more to add.

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, you said in February that South Asia was perhaps the most dangerous place in the world today. Given the massacre yesterday and the increasing nuclear tensions, do you think that the risk of another war is increasing?

And to the Prime Minister, sir, who do you hold responsible for the massacre yesterday, and what do you mean when you say, "We have the will and the means to eliminate this menace"?

President Clinton. Your turn. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Vajpayee. I'll take my turn. [Laughter] I'm sure after visiting this part of the world, the President will come to the conclusion that the situation is not so bad as it is made out to be. There are differences; there have been clashes; there is the problem of cross-country terrorism; innocent people are being killed. But there is no threat of any war. India is committed to peaceful means. We are prepared to solve all problems, discuss all problems on the table. We do not think in terms of war, and nobody should think in those terms in this subcontinent.

So far as the massacre is concerned, it's a brutal act, an outrage. This is not for the first time; it has been going on. And whenever there are chances of both countries coming together—and at the people-to-people level our relations are very good, as I realized when I visited Lahore—but there is a deliberate design to foment trouble, to encourage killing, mass murders, to sabotage any attempt to bring about normalcy in this part of the world. This policy is not going to pay. And I hope this question will be discussed by the President in Islamabad.

Q. Mr. President.

President Clinton. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press], to go back to the questions you asked me. First of all, I was encouraged by what the Prime Minister said to me in private, which was just what he said to you in public, that he did not want any of the difficulties that we have been discussing today to become the occasion for war.

I have basically four beliefs about this whole thing, and I can state them very concisely. First, I think that that sort of restraint is something

that everyone on the subcontinent should practice. Second, I think there must be a respect for the Line of Control. Third, I think some way must be found to renew the dialog.

The Prime Minister did, I thought, a brave thing in participating in the Lahore process. He took some risks to do it. He'd always said that just the facts of geography and shared history called upon him to do that. But you cannot expect a dialog to go forward unless there is an absence of violence and a respect for the Line of Control.

And the last thing that I would say is, I doubt very seriously that there is a military solution to the difficulties that the Kashmiris face. And that makes the death of these Sikhs all the more tragic and the importance of trying to restart the dialog all the more important, not just over this but other issues as well.

And the Prime Minister said he hoped I would say that in Islamabad, and I will. I don't believe—one of the nice things about having you folks with us all the time is that we can't get away with saying one thing in one place and a different thing in another. We almost have to say the same thing everywhere, or you'll find us out. So I can tell you that this is my same message: Respect the Line of Control; show restraint; stand against violence; restore the dialog.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President's 188th news conference began at 1:03 p.m. in the garden at the Hyderabad House. In his remarks, the President referred to Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh of India and U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott.

Joint Statement on United States-India Relations: A Vision for the 21st Century

March 21, 2000

At the dawn of a new century, President Clinton and Prime Minister Vajpayee resolve to create a closer and qualitatively new relationship between the United States and India.

We are two of the world's largest democracies. We are nations forged from many traditions and faiths, proving year after year that

diversity is our strength. From vastly different origins and experiences, we have come to the same conclusions: that freedom and democracy are the strongest bases for both peace and prosperity, and that they are universal aspirations, constrained neither by culture nor levels of economic development.